

SEPTEMBER 19, 1978

HUNTING HURRICANES  
(INSERTS)

ANNCR: THIS (FYI: AUGUST THROUGH OCTOBER) IS THE HURRICANE SEASON IN THE ATLANTIC, THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN THE SWIRLING STORMS SWEEP ACROSS THE OCEAN, OFTEN SLAMMING ASHORE AND CAUSING WIDESPREAD DAMAGE. KEEPING TRACK OF THE TROPICAL STORMS -- IN BOTH THE ATLANTIC AND THE PACIFIC OCEANS -- IS THE JOB OF A GROUP OF UNITED STATES AIR FORCE "HURRICANE HUNTERS." THE VOA'S LARRY FREUND REPORTS:

VOICE: MOST PILOTS ARE TRAINED TO AVOID STORMY WEATHER. BUT FLYERS SUCH AS CAPTAIN LARRY COLLINS DELIBERATELY GUIDE THEIR AIRCRAFT INTO THE MOST POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE STORMS ON EARTH. CAPTAIN COLLINS IS ATTACHED TO THE U-S AIR FORCE FIFTY-THIRD WEATHER RECONNAISSANCE SQUADRON. THE GROUP -- KNOWN AS "HURRICANE HUNTERS"-- IS BASED IN THE SOUTHERN STATE OF MISSISSIPPI. CAPTAIN COLLINS AND HIS FELLOW HURRICANE HUNTERS ARE CONTINUING A SERVICE STARTED EXPERIMENTALLY BACK IN THE EARLY NINETEEN FIFTIES.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- COLLINS

"THE TECHNOLOGY HAS ADVANCED TO THE POINT NOW TO WHERE WE HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA WHAT'S THERE BEFORE WE EVER GET THERE, EXCEPT FOR THE PRESSURES AND WIND DISTRIBUTION AND SO FORTH. BUT SIZE CERTAINLY AND SOME THE INTENSITY IS KNOWN PRIOR TO GETTING TO THE AREA. SO DEFINITELY IT'S MUCH BETTER TODAY THAN IT WAS BACK IN THOSE DAYS."

VOICE: THE AIR FORCE TEAMS THAT KEEP TRACK OF SOME OF THE WORLD'S NASTIEST WEATHER THINK THE NAME "HURRICANE HUNTERS" IS A LITTLE STALE SINCE THEY ARE NOT REALLY HUNTING THEIR QUARRY. THEY ALREADY KNOW WHERE THE HURRICANES ARE LOCATED BEFORE THEY EVEN LEAVE THEIR BASE, THANKS, TO

VOICE: PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN BY SATELLITES. BUT THERE IS STILL A  
(CONT) NEED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE HURRICANES, INFORMATION  
GOTTEN BY MEN FLYING INTO THE STORMS ... AS WEATHER  
OFFICER MAJOR FRED FOSS EXPLAINS:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- FOSS

"THE PRECISION REQUIRED IS JUST A LITTLE BIT MORE THAN  
THE SATELLITE CAN PROVIDE. THAT'S THE REASON FOR OUR  
SERVICES AND THE TYPE OF MEASURING WE DO. WE PRECISELY  
LOCATE AND MEASURE THE INTENSITY OF THE STORMS AND THAT  
PROVIDES THE FORECASTERS THAT USE THIS INFORMATION WITH  
A GOOD BASIS TO PROJECT THE PATH AND INTENSITY OF THE  
STORM AS IT WILL COME ALONG."

VOICE: THE BASIC PROBLEM, SAYS MAJOR FRED FOSS, IS TO MEASURE THE  
ENVIRONMENT AROUND THE AIRPLANE ONCE IT REACHES THE  
HURRICANE. VARIOUS INSTRUMENTS TEST THE TEMPERATURE,  
HUMIDITY AND AIR PRESSURE. AND THERE IS A SPECIAL WAY OF  
MEASURING THE WEATHER BETWEEN THE AIRPLANE AND THE OCEAN,  
A LONG CANNISTER PACKED WITH WEATHER SENSORS AND A  
TRANSMITTER.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- FOSS

"WE DROP IT OUT OF THE AIRPLANE. AND IT RADIOS BACK  
INFORMATION INTO THE AIRCRAFT THAT WE CAN REDUCE  
(TRANSLATE) (IN ORDER) TO GET TEMPERATURE AND PRESSURE  
AND HUMIDITY THROUGH THE ATMOSPHERE BELOW THE AIRPLANE.

VOICE: THE HURRICANE HUNTERS TRY TO FLY INTO THE WEAKEST POINT  
OF THE HURRICANE TO AVOID THE MOST TURBULENT WEATHER.  
BUT, SAYS CAPTAIN LARRY COLLINS, SOME OF THE FLIGHTS ARE  
"QUITE EXCITING" WITH THE AIRPLANE IN WHAT CAPTAIN  
COLLINS CALLS A "BOBBING SITUATION." ALL ALONG, THE WEATHER  
DATA COLLECTED BY THE SIX-MAN CREW IS RADIOED BACK TO  
SHORE AND USED AS THE BASIS FOR PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE

VOICE: FUTURE COURSE OF THE CYCLONIC STORM. ULTIMATELY,  
(CONT) SAYS METEOROLOGIST FRED FOSS, THE INFORMATION BECOMES  
AVAILABLE TO ANYONE WHO WANTS IT:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- FOSS

"THERE IS NO RESTRICTION OF THAT INFORMATION. AND, AS A MATTER OF FACT, IN SOME CASES WE DO HAVE -- THROUGH THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE -- CONSULTING SERVICES FOR OTHER COUNTRIES THAT DON'T REALLY HAVE THEIR OWN ABILITY TO FORECAST AS WELL AS THEY WOULD LIKE TO. OUR GOVERNMENT DOES ASSIST OTHER COUNTRIES IN USING THE INFORMATION AND ALSO MAKING FORECASTS. THE NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER AT MIAMI DOES CONSULT WITH THESE PEOPLE ALMOST CONTINUOUSLY DURING THOSE PERIODS WHEN THEY ARE IN DANGER AND OFFERS ANY ASSISTANCE THAT IT CAN IN PREDICTING THE COURSE AND INTENSITY OF THE STORM FOR THOSE COUNTRIES INVOLVED."

VOICE: TWO U-S AIR FORCE GROUPS -- ONE BASED IN THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI, THE OTHER ON THE ISLAND OF GUAM IN THE PACIFIC -- SHARE THE UNIQUE ASSIGNMENT OF FLYING INTO THE TROPICAL STORMS. THE MISSISSIPPI SQUADRON SURVEYS TROPICAL STORMS IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN, THE CARIBBEAN SEA, THE GULF OF MEXICO AND THE EASTERN PACIFIC OCEAN. THE SQUADRON BASED IN GUAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR TRACKING THE STORMS -- CALLED "TYPHOONS -- IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC OCEAN AREA. WEATHER EXPERTS, SUCH AS MAJOR FRED FOSS, AGREE THAT WITHOUT THE FIRST-HAND CHECKS OF THE DANGEROUS STORMS, THE RELIABILITY OF CRITICALLY IMPORTANT FORECASTS WOULD SHARPLY DECREASE.

TAPE: CUT FIVE -- FOSS

"I PERSONALLY WAS IN HURRICANE CAMILLE IN NINETEEN SIXTY-EIGHT AND THIS WAS A VERY, VERY STRONG STORM ALTHOUGH IT WAS RATHER SMALL IN AREA. A STORM LIKE THAT COULD HAVE, IN FACT, KILLED LITERALLY THOUSANDS (OF PEOPLE). BUT BECAUSE OF OUR EFFORTS, AND THE ABILITY OF THE AIR FORCE

TAPE: TO MEASURE THESE THINGS AND TO JUST TRACK THEM, MOST  
(CONT) PEOPLE WERE EVACUATED."

VOICE: MAJOR FRED FOSS, HUNTING HURRICANES ... AND SAVING LIVES.

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